

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 OMB-01

DHA-02 ORM-02 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08 MCT-01 COME-00 /114 W

-----231810 014575 /46

P 231640Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5858

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SANA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1259

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADS

USDOCOSOUTH PASS CWNC SOUTH FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR TS XF
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST: CURRENT TUNISIAN VIEW

REF: TUNIS 1060

1. SUMMARY: IN LONG DISCUSSION WITH TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER (AND CHAIRMAN OF ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS) HABIB CHATTY, THIS MORNING I RECOUNTED VIEWS OF SECRETARY VANCE ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES AS IMPARTED TO MAGHREB COMS FEBRUARY 18 AT AMMAN. I PARTICULARLY STRESSED IN MY PRESENTATION U.S. VIEW THAT NUB OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM CONSISTS OF (1) PEACE, (2) WITHDRAWAL AND (3) PALESTINE. I RELAYED SECRETARY'S DESIRE FOR HIS COMMENTS ON THESE THREE ELEMENTS AND RECEIVED HIS THOUGHTFUL COMMENTS AT GREAT LENGTH. IN ESSENCE, CHATTY BELIEVES THAT OUR ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT BUT HE WOULD PLACE POINTS IN EXACTLY REVERSE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, I.E. NO PEACE WITHOUT SETTLEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL QUESTION; BUT WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT WOULD BE IRRELEVANT AND NO PACE POSSIBLE WITHOUT AGREEMENT FIRST ON A PALESTINIAN STATE. SEVERAL BILATERAL QUESTIONS I TOOK UP ARE COVERED IN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SEPTEL (NOTAL). END SUMMARY.

2. BY PRIOR AGREEMENT I MET WITH CHATTY WITHIN 36 HOURS OF HIS RETURN TO TUNIS FROM FRANCE. OUR TALK LASTED JUST SHORT OF TWO HOURS, GIVING ME AMPLE TIME TO RECOUNT SECSTATE'S OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, TAKE UP A FEW BILATERAL MATTERS AND LISTEN TO HIS COMMENTS, INVITED BY SECRETARY, ON MAJOR TOPICS OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL AND PALESTINE.
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3. CHATTY EXPRESSED HIS AGREEMENT WITH THE THREE MAIN ELEMENTS OF OUR OVERVIEW BUT BELIEVED THAT, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, THEY SHOULD BE LISTED IN REVERSE ORDER. IN HIS VIEW, WITHOUT A SETTLEMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION -- SPECIFICALLY A PALESTINIAN STATE -- A DISCUSSION OF WITHDRAWAL IS IRRELEVANT; WITHOUT PRIOR AGREEMENTS ON PALESTINE AND WITHDRAWAL PEACE IS IMPOSSIBLE.

4. PALESTINE: AS HE EMPHASIZED IN OUR LAST CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT (REFTEL) THE KEY ISSUE WHICH MUST BE FACED, IN HIS OPINION, IS AN ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN KING HUSSEIN AND THE PALESTINIAN LEADERS REGARDING THE NATURE OF A SOVEREIGN PALESTINIAN STATE. THE STATE MUST HAVE NO CONSTITUTIONAL CONNECTION WITH JORDAN, AT LEAST BEFORE IT COMES INTO EXISTENCE. CHATTY BELIEVES, ON THE BASIS OF CONVERSATION WITH HUSSEIN, THAT THE KING WILL PROVE SURPRISINGLY FLEXIBLE ON THIS POINT. HUSSEIN HAD ONCE TOLD CHATTY THAT "THE PALESTINIANS WILL NEED ME MORE THAN I NEED THEM". THE CHIEF

OBSTACLE TO A PALESTINIAN STATE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER THINKS, WILL BE SYRIA, WHICH PRESENTLY ENVISIONS A PALESTINIAN ENTITY SOMEHOW TIED TO JORDAN. UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID, SADAT NOW SEEMS WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH ASSAD ON THIS. BUT CONVERSATIONS HE HAS BEEN HAVING IN TUNIS WITH PLO LEADERS LATELY LEAVE HIM IN NO DOUBT THAT EVEN THE MOST MODERATE PALESTINIANS TODAY WOULD FIND A SETTLEMENT PLACING THEM UNDER JORDANIAN SOVEREIGNTY UNACCEPTABLE. THE U.S. HAS THE POWER TO CONVINCE GOI THAT THE NATURE OF A FUTURE PALESTINIAN ENTITY SHOULD BE A MATTER FOR AGREEMENT AMONG ARABS RPT ARABS. THE SAME MODERATE PALESTINIANS ASSURE HIM THAT THE PLO LEADERSHIP ALSO FORESEES AS LOGICAL A CLOSE ECONOMIC COOPERATION BY A PALESTINIAN STATE WITH ISRAEL. INDEED, THEY WOULD WELCOME IT. IN DUE COURSE, MANY THINK, MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TIES WITH JORDAN COULD EVOLVE.

Z5. U.S.-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS: CHATTY HOPES THAT U.S. IS COMING TO REALIZE THAT CONTROL OF PLO NOW RESTS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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HANDS OF VERY MODERATE ELEMENTS. FORMER PLO TERRORIST IMAGE HAS BEEN WANING AND NEED NOW IS FOR "REHABILITATION" OF PLO AND ITS ACCEPTANCE AS ONLY VIABLE SOURCE OF FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF PALESTINIAN STATE. CHATTY APPRECIATES THAT, FOR POLITICAL REASONS, U.S. CANNOT IMMEDIATELY ACCEPT ESTABLISHMENT OF PLO OFFICE IN WASHINGTON, BUT HOPES FOR SERIES OF CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED STEPS LEADING TO THIS GOAL BETWEEN NOW AND RESUMPTION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE, WHERE PLO MUST BE REPRESENTED. "WITHOUT THE PLO THERE CAN BE NO GENEVA", HE STATED.

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
YUDOHAA/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 082
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1259

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADS

USDOCOSOUTH PASS CINCSOUTH FOR POLAD

6. WITHDRAWAL: OF THE THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF A SETTLEMENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID, WITHDRAWAL OF GOI TO APPROXIMATELY 1967 BOUNDARIES SHOULD BE EASIEST ASPECT TO RESOLVE; GOLAN COULD BE DEMILITARIZED WITH INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES; SHAM-ES-SHEIKH COULD BE CONTROLLED BY SOME INTERNATIONAL FORCE; JERUSALEM COULD HAVE SOME SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL STATUS UNDER SOME FORM OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE, AND A "CORRIDOR" LINKING GAZA WITH THE WEST BANK COULD BE WORKED OUT. HE EMPHASIZED HIS BELIEF THAT A SETTLEMENT OF THE WITHDRAWAL QUESTION IS ZSECONDARY TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BUT ALSO A PREREQUISITE TO TRUE PEACE.

7. US.S-ISRAEL: CHATTY SAID ALL ARABS, INCLUDING THE PLO,

ARE ENCOURAGED BY CHANGES THEY PERCEIVE IN ISRAELI ATTITUDES. MUCH OF ARABS' CURRENT OPTIMISM STEMS FROM CONTACTS BETWEEN PLO AND ISRAELI "PACIFISTS". STATEMENTS BY PELED AND SHARON ARE AVIDLY READ. YOUNGER ISRAELIS DO NOT SEEM SO FILLED WITH HATE. COMING ISRAELI ELECTIONS WILL BE WATCHED WITH GREATEST INTEREST AND ARABS REALIZE THAT LITTLE PROGRESS TOWARD GENEVA CAN BE EXPECTED UNTIL THEY ARE HELD IN MAY. U.S., HE HOPES, BETWEEN NOW AND GENEVA WILL CONVINCE GOI THAT IT HAS BECOME AND WILL REMAIN "INVULNERABLE" MILITARILY FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IN EXCHANGE FOR U.S.-ENDOWED INVULNERABILITY ISRAEL SHOULD BE OPEN TO U.S. PERSUASION THAT CONCESSIONS ARE NOW REQUIRED ON THEIR PART. WITH ASSAD AND SADAT (AND SOON THE PLO) ON RECORD AS WILLING TO ENTER A TREATY WITH ISRAEL, GOI'S PRINCIPLE STRATEGY AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES WILL NOT BE VIRTUALLY GUARANTEED.

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8. TUNISIAN JEWS: AMONG EFFORTS TUNISIA FEELS IT CAN MAKE AT THIS STAGE (WITH EVERYONE NOW ALMST AGREED ON A BOURGUIBIAN MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION) WILL PROBABLY BE AN EARLY DECLARATION BY THE GOT INVITING ALL JEWS WHO HAVE LEFT TUNISIA TO RETURN. THIS IS CURRENTLY UNDER STUDY, FONMIN SAID. I IMMEDIATELY APPLAUDED CHATTY FOR THIS "EXCELLENT GESTURE" AND HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE ANNOUNCED SOONEST. I POINTED TO MOROCCAN EXAMPLE WHICH I GATHERED HAD RECEIVED A GOOD RESPONSE. HE SAID 5,000 JEWISH FAMILIES HAD RETURNED TO MOROCCO AND NO JEW HAD EVER BEEN PERSECUTED IN TUNISIA.

9. CHATTY CONCLUDED BY STRESSING THAT CURRENT JUNCTURE IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY AN IMPORTANT ONE. ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT NOW WANT PEACE. ALL PARTIES NOW REALIZE CONCESSIONS MUST BE MADE. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, FRESH AND "STILL PURE", HAS COME UPON THE SCENE SETTING AN ADMIRABLY HIGH MORAL TONE, WHICH PEOPLE EXPECT OF THE U.S. HE HOPED WE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FREE WORLD'S WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW THE AMERICAN MORAL LEADERSHIP. NO TIME WAS EVER MORE FACORABLE.THE MOMENT WILL NOT RETURN AGAIN.

10. COMMENT: WHILE MUCH OF THE FOREGOING WILL NOT SOUND NEW, IT IS A FULSOME AND HONEST RENDITION O THE TUNISIAN VIEWPOINT AT THIS TIME. AS WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING, THERE IS MUCH COMING AND GOING THROUGH TUNI THESE WEEKS OF PALESTINIAN LEADERS.THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT CHATTY IS WELL PLUGGED IN WITH THEM. THERE IS ALSO NO DOUBT OF GOT'S SELF-SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY IN WHICH ITS BROTHER ARABS HAVE COME AROUND TO ACCEPTING THE NEGOTIATED SOLUTION BASED UPON RECONGNITION OF ISRAEL'S LEGITIMACY AND LEGALITY PREACHED BY BOURGUIBA SINCE 1959 AND NEVER VEERED FROM SINCE. CONCERNING

THE PLANNED INVITATION TO TUNISIA'S JEWS (40,000 AT END OF
WORLD WAR II) TO RETURN, GOT AGAIN, CHARACTERISTICALLY, IS NOT
OUT IN FRONT, BUT IS FOLLOWING THE ADMIRABLE EXAMPLE OF ITS
BIGGER BROTHER MOROCCO. TUNISIA'S AGING JEWISH COMMUNITY
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(ABOUT 5,000) IS ACTIVE IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE SAVE MILITARY,
POLICE AND DIPLOMATIC. THERE IS, AS OF INTEREST, ONE
JEWISH DEPUTY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.
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Message Attributes

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